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XI. — On Plato's *Euthyphro*.

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IN common with many other works attributed to Plato, the *Euthyphro* has had its genuineness called in question by certain modern scholars. Others, while regarding it as authentic, have disparaged it from the point of view of artistic composition and philosophical content. Schleiermacher was perhaps the first among the latter; of the former there are some who have entertained decided opinions, which, as I shall endeavor to show, are not firmly founded on fact. The pedagogical value also of this dialogue has been the subject of frequent controversy among scholars in Germany, where its use in the schools has always been considerable. In view of these circumstances it may be worth our while to subject this brief work to renewed criticism and examination. It is possible that in so doing we shall advance in some measure our understanding of the *Euthyphro* and contribute somewhat to the solution of these vexed questions.

## I.

In the dialogue there appear only two characters, Socrates and Euthyphro. This fact of itself suffices to account for one alleged defect, the lack of dramatic byplay. When we contrast this situation with that, say, of the *Gorgias*, the *Protagoras*, or the *Symposium*, it becomes at once apparent that the occasions and opportunities for a diversion from the closely reasoned argument are almost wholly wanting. Nor is there an effort made, as in the *Phaedrus*, to find a sympathetic background in nature. It is, of course, possible to maintain that such dramatic poverty argues against Platonic authorship or against the literary worth of the dialogue; but

it is at least equally possible to maintain that there may be compensations of so essential a character as to offset the lack of these more external adjuncts. I shall return to this point later on.

Of Socrates there is no need to speak at length. He appears in his customary rôle of the seeker after truth who is eager to learn from others what he himself does not profess to know. He is about to be tried for impiety; and even as he appears at the court of the King Archon to take the preliminary steps of the trial he falls in with a man who is ultra-orthodox and notorious for his fanatical devotion to matters of religion. But Socrates himself is not an abstraction, simply to be defined as devotion to truth. He is a living character, with many idiosyncrasies quite beyond the comprehension of his fellow-townsmen. He has, among other such traits, the droll humor of the sage, who, without arrogating to himself the attainment of wisdom, appreciates the ignorant conceit of the multitude that makes ostentatious pretensions to knowledge. Hence, while seeking truth in all sincerity and singleness of heart, he takes an unmistakable delight in putting to confusion those who are overconfident of having attained it.

Those who were thus rebuked and those who witnessed their discomfiture naturally regarded Socrates as a man who trifled with the most sacred truth and ruthlessly laid the ax to the root of society, since they one and all assumed without question the validity of the traditional unphilosophical views. It was idle to speak to them of the benefits that would accrue to the state and to men individually from an effort to lay a rational foundation for their beliefs. Hence it was a foregone conclusion that the attempt, which Socrates made in the *Apology*, to show that he bore a commission from God and that his mission and his manner of fulfilling it were of the very essence of piety, should not only fail to effect his acquittal but should even fail of an intelligent hearing. Man can judge only by his own ideals, and the Athenians of that day had attained no standard but that of tradition. History makes and unmakes its own ideals, and it is better to appre-

hend the progressive development of moral standards than to inveigh against temporary judgments of men. Plato, in the *Euthyphro*, makes it clear that he had attained to this insight; for nothing is more evident than the purpose to set over against each other two ideals, one based upon tradition, the other upon reason. Euthyphro, the type of the former, is benevolent but utterly incapable of understanding Socrates. If the *Euthyphro* possessed no other value but that of enforcing this truth, its claims to perpetual interest would have sufficient foundation.

Of Euthyphro, who met Socrates at the porch of the King Archon and discoursed with him on the true nature of piety, we know ultimately only what may be learned from Plato. Apart from the dialogue of which we are now speaking, he is mentioned also in the *Cratylus*. Euthyphro is characterized there as a reckless etymologist, whose distinctions are often far-fetched and ridiculous. In our dialogue he is a *μάντις*, seer, devoted to matters of religion and orthodox to a fault. Indeed, it is in consequence of his extreme orthodoxy and his disposition to apply to human affairs analogies drawn from the mythical conduct of the gods, that he is led to bring against his father the strange and questionable action for manslaughter which affords occasion for our dialogue. Dramatically he is, of course, intended primarily to serve as a foil to set off the character and conduct of Socrates. We have here piety, old style and new, placed in immediate juxtaposition for the sake of contrast. The piety of Euthyphro, well-intentioned but unenlightened, may lead to conduct the reverse of pious, as judged by the standards of the new; and Socrates, just because he discards traditional ideals and sanctions, is certain to be adjudged a paragon of impiety. Socrates is, however, so punctilious in his observance of the forms of the religion of state, and Euthyphro has a heart so much wider than his creed that he is prepared, in spite of their differences, to see in Socrates the saving influence of the city.<sup>1</sup> To me there seems to be an exquisite fitness in the

<sup>1</sup> 3 A: ἀτεχνῶς γάρ μοι δοκεῖ ἀφ' Ἑστίας ἀρχεσθαι κακουργεῖν τὴν πόλιν, ἐπιχειρῶν ἀδικεῖν σέ.

absence of non-essential dramatic detail which would only serve to distract the attention and divert the reader from the meeting of these two embodied ideals. And in the discussion of a theme such as this it would seem most proper that there should be no idle witnesses,<sup>1</sup> either to satisfy a questionable curiosity or to have old faiths shaken<sup>2</sup> without acquiring a new insight to take their place. Although, as we shall soon see, the argument does properly lead to such insight, it cannot be doubted that the suggested conclusion must have been missed if it had been listened to by a representative company of Athenian youths.

It is not necessary to say that Plato intended to put this striking contrast to apologetic uses. The same purpose appears also in the emphatic utterance Socrates gives to his surprise at Euthyphro's conduct toward his father. Socrates was often charged with inciting sons to disrespect and even violence to their parents. What more effective means of meeting this calumny than this could be devised by his friend? The apologetic nature of the *Euthyphro* becomes most evident, however, when one considers the argument as a whole. If Euthyphro, who is professedly and professionally devoted to religion, cannot produce, even after the most continuous suggestion, some valid criterion of piety and impiety, *a fortiori* it is hardly to be expected that a 'bean-chosen' panel of Athenian citizens will pronounce intelli-

<sup>1</sup> When Plato introduces numerous interlocutors he either has dramatic ends in view, which here would have no place, or introduces new points of view; but where there are only two ideals to be placed in contrast there is nothing to be gained by multiplying representatives. Compare the remarks made by Gomperz, *Griechische Denker*, vol. II. p. 293: "Hinter Euthyphron ist gewiss nicht umsonst die Gestalt des Meletos aufgetaucht. Der eine ist das Gegenbild des andern. Beide fassen auf den herkömmlichen Meinungen über die göttlichen Dinge, welches das sokratische Kreuzverhör als unklar und in sich widerspruchsvoll erweist."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plato, *Repub.* 378 A foll.: τὰ δὲ δὴ τοῦ Κρόνου ἔργα καὶ πάθη ὑπὸ τοῦ υἱέος, οὐδ' ἂν εἴ ἦν ἀληθὴ, ᾧ μὴν δεῖν ῥαδίως οὕτω λέγεσθαι πρὸς ἄφρονάς τε καὶ νέους, ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν σιγᾶσθαι, εἰ δὲ ἀνάγκη τις ἦν λέγειν, δι' ἀπορρήτων ἀκοῦειν ὡς ὀλιγίστους, θυσιαμένους οὐ χοῖρον, ἀλλὰ τι μέγα καὶ ἀπορον θῆμα, ὅπως ὃ τι ἐλαχίστοις συνέβη ἀκοῦσαι . . . οὐδὲ λεκτέον νέῳ ἀκούοντι, ὡς ἀδικῶν τὰ ἔσχατα οὐδὲν ἂν θαυμαστὸν ποιῶι, οὐδ' αὖ ἀδικούντα πατέρα κολάζων παντὶ τρέφω, ἀλλὰ δρῶν ἂν ὅπερ θεῶν οἱ πρῶτοί τε καὶ μέγιστοι.

gently upon a case the adjudication of which involves the employment of such a criterion.

## II.

To facilitate the understanding of the dialogue we may next proceed to recapitulate its contents. Socrates and Euthyphro, each engaged in a suit involving matters of religion, meet before the court of the King Archon, who has jurisdiction in such cases. They state, each in turn, the causes that bring them into court. Socrates is arraigned on a charge of impiety; Euthyphro is the complainant in a suit which can be justified only on the supposition that he knows the essence and limits of piety. Therefore Socrates naturally appeals to him for instruction and guidance toward that wisdom of life which is born of insight, and does so the more confidently because Euthyphro professes to be an adept in occult religious lore. The latter then responds in a series of definitions of piety (5 D-15 C). He first declares that piety consists in doing as he is doing, and buttresses his assertion by citing divine precedents for such conduct. Socrates takes exception to such instances as in themselves perhaps not altogether authentic; but waives the point, only to insist that he requires not an example but a definition of piety (5 D-6 E).

Euthyphro now declares that what is agreeable to the gods is pious; what is not, is impious. This statement Socrates refutes by pointing out that dissensions among the gods arise chiefly if not exclusively when they differ in judgment, some pronouncing an act to be just, others unjust. Since, therefore, by hypothesis, the pious is agreeable to the gods and the impious is not, if we assume, as Euthyphro does, diversity of judgment among them, the same conduct, and therefore the pious and the impious, must be equally agreeable to the gods. But the impious was declared to be the reverse of the pious. Euthyphro objects that no god would contend that the guilty should not be punished. 'Neither would a man,' retorts Socrates; 'the question in every instance is

whether some one has been at fault, and who?' Hence the first point to be established is that *all* the gods are agreed in pronouncing Euthyphro's conduct just and his father's unjust. Plato here gives us a clear hint that if mythology and religion are to become available for moral support, polytheism must yield to a practical monotheism. But even if that point were established the definition would not be adequate; hence Socrates dispenses Euthyphro from that task. To test the definition fairly it is thus amended: piety is what all the gods love; impiety, *per contra*, what all the gods hate. Socrates then proceeds to show that even when thus interpreted this second definition presents not the essence (οὐσία) but a mere accidental attribute (πάθος) of piety (6 E-11 B).

There follows a brief interlude in which, after mutual recriminations because of the failure of the inquiry, Socrates prevails upon Euthyphro to resume the quest under his guidance (11 B-11 E).

After considerable preliminary instruction on the part of Socrates touching the relation of the species to the genus, Euthyphro ventures a third definition: piety is that form of right conduct which relates to the 'care' of the gods.<sup>1</sup> Socrates takes exception to the vagueness of the term *θεραπεία*, which I have translated 'care,' and *ὑπηρετική*, 'ministration,' is substituted as more adequately expressing the relation. But, supposing that piety is a ministration, it must be service to some end. What, then, is its *ἔργον*? But Euthyphro, like all those who accept the tenets of religion as merely a tradition of the fathers, has no precise and comprehensive answer to give. He therefore takes refuge in generalities (11 E-14 B). But Socrates does not acquiesce in this evasion, and tells Euthyphro that he turns aside just when he is hard by the truth. He then extracts a fourth definition from a rhetorical period in which Euthyphro endeavors to conceal his confusion. It runs thus: Piety is the art or the science of sacrifice and prayer. After exposing the conception of barter inherent in the rites of prayer and

<sup>1</sup> 12 E: τοῦτο τοίνυν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ μέρος τοῦ δικαίου εἶναι εὐσεβές τε καὶ δσιον, τὸ περὶ τὴν τῶν θεῶν θεραπείαν.

sacrifice, Socrates readily shows that this last statement is in effect nothing but the second definition refurbished, and that it therefore needs no further refutation (14 B-15 C).

Despite the protests of Socrates, Euthyphro now departs, alleging another engagement, and leaves the inquiry unfinished.

### III.

Dramatically the position proper to the *Euthyphro* is between the *Theaetetus* and the *Apology*. At the close of the former Socrates says, *νῦν μὲν οὖν ἀπαντητέον μοι εἰς τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως στοὰν ἐπὶ τὴν Μελήτου γραφὴν, ἣν με γέγραπται*. At the beginning of our dialogue we find him meeting the seer at the portico of the King Archon, whither he had in the *Theaetetus* declared his intention of going. His business there is to take the initial steps of the trial which is to call forth his *Apology*. It was evidently this fact which led Aristophanes of Byzantium<sup>1</sup> to place the *Euthyphro* between the *Theaetetus* and the *Apology* in his fourth trilogy, and Thrasyllus<sup>2</sup> so to arrange his first tetralogy as to make the *Euthyphro* precede the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. Obviously, if one considers its dramatic setting and the argument which has been already sketched, our dialogue must be in some way closely related to the *Apology*; but scholars seem to have bestowed upon this question much less attention than it deserves.

The apologetic strain in the *Euthyphro* has been noted ever since the time of Schleiermacher, and of course its outward relation to the trial of Socrates is too evident to escape notice. But most scholars have thought that the *Euthyphro* was written at a time when the threat of bringing Socrates to trial was first made, before his friends fully realized the seriousness of his danger.<sup>3</sup> This view finds its chief support in the difference in the emotional tone with which Plato refers to the death of Socrates in the *Euthyphro* as com-

<sup>1</sup> Laert. Diog. III. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* III. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Zeller, *Phil. der Griechen*, II. i, p. 193, n. 1. Zeller himself defends this view.

pared, for example, with the *Gorgias*. But this fact may be accounted for equally well on another hypothesis. Grote, as it seems to me, has sufficiently refuted this view, but we shall soon see that it becomes wholly untenable when the real relation between the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology* is perceived. There are, however, other scholars who pretend to discover either no apologetic tone at all,<sup>1</sup> or only such as pervades all of Plato's dialogues.<sup>2</sup> But here again Grote has presented the case so clearly that one wonders whether Bonitz did not neglect his treatment of the question. To a considerable extent, indeed, the difference between scholars on this head seems to be due to their varying understanding of the term 'apologetic.' Some at once think of a defence addressed to the dicasts; others, as *e.g.* Grote, mean an appeal to the higher court of posterity.

Let us first recall to mind that in the indictment brought against him Socrates was charged chiefly with irreligion and impiety. All other counts specified were subordinated and reduced to this. When it was charged that he corrupted the young it was the meaning of his accusers that he did so by inculcating a spirit of irreverence. However faulty the plea of the *Apology* may be when considered from the legal point of view, Socrates unquestionably, in his defence, puts forth every effort to meet this charge. He does not confine his argument to a rebuttal of the evidence presented by the prosecution: he endeavors to establish directly and by positive proof that his mode of life is not only passively conformable to the laws and religious observances of the state, but that it is aggressively pious and has received the signal approval of heaven. He refers to the oracle given by the Delphian Apollo in response to the question of his devoted Chaerephon, and is at especial pains to prove that he bears a commission to live and labor as he does, a commission expressly given by the god who reigned supreme in the hearts of the religious Greeks of that day. And it is this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Yxem, *Ueber Platons Euthyphro*, p. 8. Contrast Gomperz as quoted in n. 1, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bonitz, *Platonische Studien* (3d ed.), p. 239.

life of aggressive piety that he fondly calls 'his ministration to the god' (τὴν ἐμὴν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν, *Apol.* 30 A).

In the *Gorgias*, 527 B, Socrates is made to say ἀλλ' ἐν τοσούτοις λόγοις τῶν ἄλλων ἐλεγχόμενων μόνος οὗτος ἡρεμεῖ ὁ λόγος, ὡς εὐλαβητέον ἐστὶν τὸ ἀδικεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι. Now, in recent years a principle governing the interpretation of the dialogues of Plato has obtained among scholars almost universal recognition. It may be thus stated: In determining the positive doctrine which Plato desired the reader to infer from the argument of any dialogue, we must take for our point of departure the positions taken and left finally unrefuted. It is not necessary that the argument in question should have been voiced by Socrates as the supposed representative of Plato, whose thought is reproduced by the whole dialogue, not by any single part of it. If now we turn to the *Euthyphro* we perceive that the third of the four definitions there offered was not refuted. On the contrary, Socrates called attention to it in the most dramatic way. Euthyphro had stated that piety was that form of right conduct relating to the service of the gods.<sup>1</sup> Whereupon Socrates inquired what the gods effected by the ministrations of men; but his respondent is unable to give a more specific answer than the vague generality, πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ. Again Socrates endeavors to win from him a more significant reply. In vain. Euthyphro is a rhapsode, not a philosopher. In a prolix outburst of rhetoric he attempts to cover his retreat as he returns to the point of view of the traditional worship. It is evident that Socrates is more than half serious when he rebukes him thus:<sup>2</sup> ἡ πολὺ μοι διὰ βραχυτέρων, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, εἰ ἐβούλον, εἶπες ἂν τὸ κεφάλαιον ὧν ἡρώτων. ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐ πρόθυμός με εἰ διδάξαι, δῆλος εἶ. καὶ γὰρ νῦν ἐπειδὴ ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἦσθα, ἀπετράπου· ὃ εἰ ἀπεκρίνω, ἱκανῶς ἂν ἤδη παρὰ σοῦ τὴν ὁσιότητα ἐμεμαθήκη. All this conspires to prove that the third definition affords the key to the meaning of the dialogue.

If now one returns, with that definition in mind, to the *Apology*, one cannot but be struck by the phraseology in

<sup>1</sup> See above, note 1, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> 14 B.

which Socrates there voices most forcibly the conviction on which is based his claim to innocence and piety:<sup>1</sup> ταῦτα γὰρ κελεύει ὁ θεός, εὖ ἴστε, καὶ ἐγὼ οἶμαι οὐδέν πω ὑμῖν μείζον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ τὴν ἐμὴν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν. Socher,<sup>2</sup> one of the most clear-sighted of the earlier modern writers on Plato, perceived not only that the third definition of the *Euthyphro* afforded the key to its interpretation but also that it stood in some relation to this passage in the *Apology*. Had he enforced his views, as he might have done, the truth would certainly not have gone so long unacknowledged. I trust it is now clear that the *Euthyphro* was written with the *Apology* in view, and that the change from *θεραπεία* to *ὑπηρετική* was made in part to mark the connection with Socrates' τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσία. This does not, indeed, formally complete the definition of the *δσιον* broached in the *Euthyphro*; but it does point unmistakably the direction in which we are to look for the matter with which to supplement it.

#### IV.

The upshot of the argument of the *Euthyphro* is, therefore, that piety is man's ministration to God directed to the accomplishment of some end supremely great and fair. This statement is open, in the abstract, to two interpretations: one from the point of view of the author of the *Euthyphro*, the other on the basis of Socrates' own conceptions. For, as we have seen, the argument of the *Euthyphro* is clearly set into relation with that of the *Apology*. Now the *Apology* is, to use the expression of Grote, "in substance the real defence of Socrates, reported, and of course dressed up, yet not intentionally transformed, by Plato." Xenophon,<sup>3</sup> no less than Plato, makes it clear that obedience is one of the prime requisites of piety. As we turn to the *Apology* for some indication of

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.* 30 A.

<sup>2</sup> Jos. Socher, *Ueber Platons Schriften*, Munich, 1820, p. 62: "Gott dienen ist Religion: giebt es einen Zweck der Gottheit, ein erhabenes Werk, zu dessen Vollfuehrung sie die Menschen als Mitarbeiter aufruft? Welches ist dieses? Hier liegt der Schluessel! Cf. 13 E cum *Apol.* 30 A."

<sup>3</sup> Xenophon, *Mem.* IV. iii, 16-18; vi, 4.

the glorious object which man by his obedient service assists God in realizing, we think naturally of the impressive words<sup>1</sup> to which we have already referred: ταῦτα γὰρ κελεύει ὁ θεός, εὖ ἴστε, καὶ ἐγὼ οἶμαι οὐδέν πω ὑμῖν μείζον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ τὴν ἐμὴν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν. οὐδέν γὰρ ἄλλο πράττων ἐγὼ περιέρχομαι ἢ πείθων ὑμῶν καὶ νεωτέρους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους μήτε σωμάτων ἐπιμελείσθαι μήτε χρημάτων πρότερον μηδὲ οὕτω σφόδρα ὥς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὥς ἀρίστη ἔσται. We all are familiar with Socrates' cure of souls: it is his mission to clarify men's passions and right their lives by ridding their minds of false conceptions and assisting the birth and growth of true insight. This is for him the Kingdom of God for which he was called to prepare the way. For Socrates, this is as far as we may safely pursue the matter.

But we are now concerned with Plato, as the author of the *Euthyphro*. It becomes us, therefore, to inquire whether his thought does not lead us beyond these suggestions of the *Apology*. The question as to the ἔργον accomplished by the ministrations of man, which is raised by Socrates in the *Euthyphro*, when considered in its ultimate bearings, points unmistakably to the systematic development of Plato's thought. The only answer to Socrates' question is, therefore, that the ἔργον to be effected by man's service of God is the realization of the Good, — not the realization of this or that particular good. What to Socrates could have meant no more than preparing the way for the Kingdom of God, to Plato, with his constructive and legislative mind, meant a positive and definite attempt to lay the foundations and establish the government of the City of God. For the Good, with Plato, is essentially the ideal of a life in a perfect social system, conducted on principles of true insight into the nature and meaning of things.

Now, according to Plato, philosophy is the endeavor, more or less successful in proportion to its truth, to realize the Good in all things. Philosophy and religion join in the

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.* 30 A.

demand that we flee from the unmeaning and the evil and take refuge with the Good. διὸ καὶ πειρᾶσθαι χρὴ ἐνθένδε ἐκείσε φεύγειν ὅτι τάχιστα. φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν. ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι.<sup>1</sup> This philosophic life we have learned from the *Republic* to call the life of justice, — the life of virtue in itself complete. In the *Euthyphro* piety is singled out as a special aspect of that philosophic and virtuous life: the ὅσιον is defined as μέρος δικαίου τὸ περὶ τὴν τῶν θεῶν θεραπείαν. We may say, then, that the Good is a power or agency that operates to its own realization in the social world through the insight-guided efforts of mankind. That it is a man's true function to bear his part in this self-realization of the Good is, in a word, the ethical import of the *Republic*. The *Euthyphro* adds the conscious reference to Deity, the thought that this philosophic life is a service in a personal relation as a willed obedience. Taking due account of the formal peculiarities of the Greek terminology, the definition thus reached may be paraphrased somewhat as follows: 'Religion is the intelligent and conscientious endeavor of man to further the realization of the Good in human society, as under God.' The Good and God are not here expressly identified; but the line of distinction between these two conceptions was in Plato's thought almost if not quite effaced. If we take account of this circumstance and make explicit the implication of the argument, we may say that religion is the devoted service of the Ideal, consciously conceived as God. We thus reach a thought which, while undeniably lying in the direct path of Platonic philosophizing, has not been superseded by any pronouncement of modern philosophers of religion.

We thus observe that there are positive suggestions of doctrine made in the *Euthyphro* relative to the matter of religion. The negative criticism of popular ideas is therefore calculated to clear the way for a more adequate conception. This higher view was not, however, to be attained simply by clarifying the notions already entertained by the people.

<sup>1</sup> *Theaetetus*, 176 A B.

Had this been possible, Plato's contribution to the history of religious thought would not have been so original, although its value to his people would perhaps have been enhanced. When Socrates assumes the conduct of the discourse, at 11 E, he is made to direct it to a consideration of the relation between the concepts *ὅσιον* and *δίκαιον*, in which Euthyphro concedes that the former is to be subsumed under the latter. Gomperz,<sup>1</sup> as it seems to me, is quite right in maintaining against Bonitz that in the popular view these concepts were entirely coördinate; and indeed Plato in the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*, when speaking in the popular language, so regarded them. This fact, however, only serves to emphasize the originality of Plato's thought; for it is evidently to be placed in connection with the fourfold virtue comprehended in *δικαιοσύνη*, as elaborated in the scheme of the *Republic*. Speaking of the omission of *δουλοῦς* from that list Gomperz<sup>2</sup> justly remarks: "Nicht als ob er den göttlichen Dingen jemals gleichgültig gegenübergestanden wäre. Der Unterschied liegt bloss darin, das er einen besonderen, den Göttern, der Gottheit oder dem Göttlichen gegenüber geltenden Pflichtenkreis anzuerkennen aufgehört hat. Diese Wandlung schliesst nicht eine Minderung, sondern eine Steigerung der Ehrfurcht vor der mehr und mehr mit dem Prinzip des Guten selbst identifizierten Gottheit in sich, eine immer vollständigere Abkehr von den anthropomorphischen Vorstellungen der Volksreligion."

This development was directly due to the fact that Plato's dominant interest was ethical, in the social sense. As we have previously had occasion to remark, the Good was to him primarily an ideal of social life and was applied by extension to the world of matter only in a secondary sense. In like manner *δικαιοσύνη* had indeed come to represent to the popular mind the essence of virtue, but only in the narrower sphere of social morality. When, therefore, Plato boldly carries it into the larger field and makes it govern even man's relations to God, he is, from a certain point of view, merely

<sup>1</sup> Gomperz, *Griechische Denker*, vol. II. p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 293.

displaying again his fundamental bias for social philosophy. This again has its parallels in the present-day discussions relative to the conception of God, according to which the idea of God is defined in terms of the social ideal.

There is, moreover, another contribution to religious philosophy contained in the criticism of the popular religion offered in the first, and chiefly negative, portion of the *Euthyphro*. In a discussion of excessive subtlety<sup>1</sup> Socrates leads up to the thought that the pious is pious not because it is agreeable to the gods, but, on the contrary, is agreeable to the gods because it is pious. Whatever may be our judgment upon the argument that conducts us to this conclusion, there can be no doubt of the significance of the conclusion itself. It plainly asserts the autonomy of the human spirit even in matters of religion. This is indeed only a further step in the direction taken by the suggestion, above noted, that, if religion is to support morality, polytheism with its capricious dissidence in ethical judgments must give place to a rational monotheism. Here, however, the human spirit is made to evolve its own ideal, which is also supposed to appeal to an approving Deity. The coincidence of man's ideal with the will of God thereby becomes the ultimate postulate of the moral life.

## V.

We may now address ourselves briefly to the question as to the authenticity of the *Euthyphro*. The most serious doubts as to its Platonic origin are those which were suggested by Schleiermacher. They relate to the philosophical content and to the dialectical conduct of the argument. On the former head enough has already been said to warrant us in dismissing the objections as not well taken. In regard to the second point, fault has been found with Socrates for insisting with so much emphasis on the proper definition of *δσιον*, whereas the instructions for defining terms here given in the *Euthyphro* are neither so detailed nor so often

<sup>1</sup> *Euthyphro*, 9 E foll.

reiterated as in the *Meno*.<sup>1</sup> There is, moreover, a special justification for this procedure in the *Euthyphro*, which lends to the argument a fitness far greater than that which may be claimed for the larger dialogue. The unphilosophical mind is atomically constituted. Every idea or belief stands unrelated to any other: things are just so or are not so, and there is an end of argument. The Sophists had cleared the way for some elementary reflection on moral questions; but as yet, among the rank and file in Athenian life, there was no appreciable effect produced by the 'Aufklärung' upon religious beliefs. However much men in his day may have accustomed themselves to reflect upon the common virtues, Euthyphro certainly represents the typical Athenian when he declares that piety consists in doing as he is doing. And this is true, as all could testify, even in our own day. The illustration, therefore, which the *Euthyphro* gives of this deeply rooted characteristic of human nature must be conceded to possess an independent value of its own.

Another passage has been made the subject of much criticism. At 10 A foll., Socrates examines the relation between piety and the fact that the gods love piety. Here occurs the argument which we have already considered from a different point of view in the last section. Naturally such an inquiry would lead to some subtlety; critics are agreed in pronouncing it supersubtle. I think we must grant that the dialectic is rather bewildering; and even if we make this confession it is only fair to repeat that the Platonic Socrates not unfrequently evinces a mischievous delight in producing in his interlocutors the σκοτοδινία ἑλιγμός τε for which he seems to have been notorious. Yet in this particular case this effect is due in no small measure to the circumstance that in the discussion three somewhat parallel pairs of notions are not kept absolutely apart. These notions are, active: passive:: antecedent: consequent:: cause: effect. Now there are two considerations that may be urged in defence of this passage in the *Euthyphro*: first, it is by no means certain

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fritzsche, *Prolegomena ad Menonem*, p. 21, n. 4.

that any one in Plato's day had clearly distinguished between these ideas, for in modern scientific thought, at any rate, 'cause and effect' did not appear in their present form much before the time of Galileo; second, modern psychological logic must regard the argument of the *Euthyphro* as possessed of great intrinsic and historical value. We must not expect to find Plato handling, with the glib dexterity of the modern popular scientist, so-called scientific notions which did not reach their stereotyped formulation until later and are in great part being dissipated by the most recent philosophy.

I shall not pause to review in detail the arguments against the authenticity of our dialogue which are based upon considerations of language<sup>1</sup> and the Platonic doctrine of Ideas.<sup>2</sup> Others have dealt with these questions in a manner calculated to satisfy all reasonable demands. After the foregoing discussion I think we may safely dismiss all the arguments intended to prove that the *Euthyphro* is not the authentic work of Plato, and turn to a brief consideration of the probable date of the dialogue.

## VI.

In an earlier section of this paper we sought to define the precise relation subsisting between the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology*. We found it to be such as necessarily to presuppose the publication by Plato of the formal defence of Socrates before he wrote this further appeal to posterity. The dramatic setting and the evolution of the argument alike make this evident. Since, however, the date of the *Apology* cannot be definitely fixed, we thus gain only a relative *terminus post quem*. Schanz,<sup>3</sup> indeed, has directed attention afresh to a fact that may lead to somewhat more definite

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fritzsche, *l.c.*, and Bonitz, *Platonische Studien*, p. 240 foll.

<sup>2</sup> The right point of view was given by Shorey, *Dissertatio de Platonis Ideis*. Cf. also Bonitz, *op. cit.*, p. 240 foll., and Zeller, *Phil. der Griechen*, II. i, p. 525, n. 1. Most of the exceptions taken to the vocabulary rest upon false notions relative to the doctrine of Ideas or to the date of the dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> Schanz, *Euthyphro*, Leipsic, 1887, *Einleitung*, p. 10 foll.

results. Euthyphro's indictment of his father is dramatically made contemporary with the trial of Socrates. Now the nature of this indictment was such that it must have been brought almost immediately after the commission of the manslaughter with which his father was charged. But, as Euthyphro's father was a cleruch on the island of Naxos, the alleged crime must have been committed at least four or five years earlier, since, with the loss of all Athens' colonies in 404 B.C., the cleruchs also would be dispossessed.<sup>1</sup> We have here, therefore, one of Plato's familiar anachronisms, admitted for dramatic effect. It is not difficult to perceive what the effect was calculated to be; but the anachronism remains and compels us to date the dialogue a considerable number of years after the trial of Socrates. Unless this is done, we destroy the artistic framework by emphasizing this untruth of detail.

The same general result is reached if we consider the tone in which Plato, in the *Euthyphro*, touches upon the death of Socrates. In this respect the difference between our dialogue and the *Gorgias* is marked. Indeed, Wilamowitz<sup>2</sup> has conjectured that Plato was led to write the *Euthyphro* in answer to criticisms evoked by the injunction of the *Gorgias* (480 D, 507 D) to prosecute one's kindred in case of guilt. This is probably nothing but an idle fancy; but various indications support the date to which we are thus referred. The treatment of the Ideas, as has been previously said, does not afford a certain clue; but the general agreement, in result, with the *Republic*, to which attention was directed above, and the reference of the *δσιον* to the *δίκαιον* and so to the later fourfold virtue, suggest that Plato had definitely advanced beyond the semi-popular enumeration of five virtues in the *Protagoras*.<sup>3</sup> It seems impossible to assign

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Xen. *Mem.*, II. viii, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Wilamowitz, *Philol. Untersuchungen*, I. 219, note. This would make Euthyphro, who is the type of the unreflecting Athenian, represent the point of view taken by Socrates in the *Gorgias* (cf. *Euthyphro*, 5 D). Although Socrates in the *Gorgias* professes only to voice the convictions of ordinary men, he really does more. I regard the suggestion as quite without support.

<sup>3</sup> *Protagoras*, 349 B.

the *Euthyphro* a place after the *Republic*; but certain critics<sup>1</sup> have pretended to find the text for the homily in our discourse in the famous discussion on the immoralities attributed to the gods, which is to be found in *Republic*, 378 A B. If the old puzzle of the composition of Plato's masterpiece could be solved, there might be some hope of reaching a conclusion also in regard to the *Euthyphro*; for, if it should be shown that there is an earlier and a later portion of the *Republic*, our dialogue would naturally fall into line as a companion-piece to the part first conceived, to which Book II. would certainly belong.

## VII.

Having thus completed our survey, we may end with a word touching the pedagogical value of the work we have been considering. There can be no doubt that Plato intended the *Euthyphro* to serve as an introduction to the group comprising the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the *Phaedo*. This is made evident by the dramatic setting of the dialogue no less than by its contents. In a previous section of this paper I have endeavored to show that the true meaning of the *Euthyphro* cannot be grasped except as it is interpreted by the *Apology*. It need hardly be said that this statement may be equally well reversed. Why, we may ask, should Plato have recurred to this theme in after years if he was not convinced that the plea of Socrates before the dicasts could be placed in a truer light by considerations he should offer?

But there are certain arguments for the use of the *Euthyphro* in our schools, which derive their weight chiefly from our educational practice. All students who pursue the subject of Greek are expected to read the *Apology* and the *Crito*, and there is a noble fitness in this arrangement. The pedagogical problem arises from the fact that the beginner approaches the *Apology* without having read any of the dialogues of Plato. While it is true that this work, considered purely as so much Greek, is less difficult than the *Euthyphro*, it must

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ast, *Platons Leben und Schriften*, p. 472; Schaarschmidt, *Die Sammlung der Platonischen Schriften*, p. 395.

at once occur to the teacher that there are other and greater difficulties to counterbalance this advantage. The boy's notions regarding Socrates are very vague, and no amount of talk by the teacher would avail to make plain to him just why the Athenians should think him obnoxious and desire to put him to death. A concrete portrayal of the living Socrates, as he went about interrogating every man he met as to the grounds of his beliefs, would prepare the student much more effectively to grasp the real meaning of that fateful trial.

In casting about for such a means, one might be tempted to try the *Memorabilia*; but Xenophon was apparently too conscious of the need of an apology for the life of Socrates. Hence he gives us a rather distorted picture, calculated to lead us to think of the master as a preacher. Certain of the lesser Platonic dialogues might also receive some consideration, but they are not so well adapted for the purpose as is the *Euthyphro*. The discussions of temperance, courage, and friendship, in *Charmides*, *Laches*, and *Lysis*, do not touch the quick, as does the discourse on piety. For here we have a most vital question; and the logical subtleties, which render the dialogue difficult to the student, are well calculated to impress him with the baffling sense of confusion and distrust with which the colloquies of Socrates filled the unschooled minds of his Athenian auditors. In view of these considerations it would seem that it is a just matter for regret that the *Euthyphro* is so little read in American schools.